NCA
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BUI TUAN

VIETNAM-CAMBODIA CONFLICT: THE LEGACIES

ANNCR:

VOA'S BUI TUAN LOOKS AT THE CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE BORDER CONFLICT IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HISTORICAL ANIMOSITIES BETWEEN THE TWO INDOCHINESE STATES.

VOICE:

AMONG THE MORE INTERESTING ASPECTS OF THE MILITARY CONFLICT BETWEEN CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE BORDER FORCES IS THAT IT INVOLVES TWO COMMUNIST STATES WHOSE LEADERS NOT TOO MANY YEARS AGO MAINTAINED CLOSE TIES DURING A COMMON STRUGGLE AGAINST THE FRENCH AND LATER THE UNITED STATES. BUT TO THOSE FAMILIAR WITH INDO-CHINA'S TROUBLED HISTORY, THE PRESENT CONFLICT COMES AS NO SURPRISE.

CAMBODIA'S AMBASSADOR IN PEKING, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE THIS WEEK IN THE CHINESE CAPITAL, DENOUNCED WHAT HE CALLED "REPEATED ACTS OF AGRESSION" BY VIETNAM AND OBSERVED THAT "THERE IS NO ROOM FOR FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES." MUCH THE SAME WAS SAID YEARS AGO BY FORMER CAMBODIAN CHIEF-OF-STATE PRINCE NORODOM SIHANOUK AND BY HIS SUCCESSOR PRESIDENT LON NOL. DRIVEN BY THE IDEA THAT CAMBODIA'S FOREIGN POLICIES SHOULD BE SHAPED SO TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE BY ITS POWERFUL COMMUNIST NEIGHBOR, PRINCE SIHANOUK, IN THE LATE 1960'S, RELUCTANTLY PERMITTED NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIETCONG TROOPS TO USE THE EASTERN PARTS OF HIS COUNTRY AS SANCTUARIES FROM WHICH TO SUPPORT THEIR OPERATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM. NONETHELESS, HE CONTINUED TO REFER TO THE VIETNAMESE WITH SCORN, WHETHER THEY BE COMMUNIST OR ANTI-COMMUNIST

IN MARCH OF 1970, WHILE PRINCE SIHANOUK WAS IN EUROPE, MARSHAL LON NOL SEIZED CONTROL OF THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, AMERICAN AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS WERE

CALLED ON BY THE NEW CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT TO MOVE INTO CAMBODIA TO DRIVE COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE TROOPS FROM THEIR BORDER AREA SANCTUARIES. BUT THIS COOPERATION BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM DID NOT PREVENT A MASSIVE CRACKDOWN BY THE PHONM PENH GOVERNMENT AGAINST THE SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND VIETNAMESE THEN LIVING IN CAMBODIA. IT'S ESTIMATED THAT SOME TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND VIETNAMESE -- MANY OF THEM WHO HAD SPENT THEIR ENTIRE LIVES IN CAMBODIA -- FLED TO SOUTH VIETNAM BEFORE THE END OF THE INDOCHINA WAR.

(OPT) AT LEAST TWO LEADING FIGURES AMONG THE CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP WERE BORN IN SOUTH VIETNAM, IN WHAT WAS FORMERLY CAMBODIAN TERRITORY. DEPUTY PREMIER IN CHARGE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IENG SARY -- PROBABLY THE MOST INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN FIGURE IN THE CAMBODIAN HIERARCHY -- WAS BORN IN THE PROVINCE OF CUU LONG (FORMERLY VINH BINH). AS WAS CAMBODIA'S DEPUTY PREMIER IN CHARGE OF DEFENSE. (END OPT)

FROM ALL REPORTS THE BORDER CLASHES HAVE OCCURRED SPORADICALL SINCE MAY OF 1975, REACHING LARGE PROPORTIONS IN SEPTEMBER OF LAST YEAR. CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROBLEM IS THE FACT THAT THE BORDERS BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM ARE POORLY MARKED AND HAVE NEVER BEEN DILINEATED IN FORMAL AGREEMENTS OR TREATIES. OBSERVERS SAY THIS FACT, PLUS THE HISTORICAL ANIMOSITIES IN CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS, SUGGEST THAT A RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT MAY BE SOME TIME OFF.

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